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THE RE-MAKING OF CHINA

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TO

MY DEAR MOTHER

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK IN LOVING GRATITUDE

PREFACE

THIS little book, which I offer to the public, in no way presumes to compete with the several excellent works upon China which have recently appeared, and from which I have occasionally quoted.

It is merely the outcome of the very close study I have bestowed upon the problems so interesting and absorbing which the recent changes in that country have brought into prominence.

A. W.

June 1914.

THE RE-MAKING OF CHINA

CHAPTER I

The unchanging East—Condition of the country during the minority of the Emperor Kwanghsu—The Emperor attains his majority—His meeting with Kang Yu-wei and adoption of a policy of reform coincident with a period of foreign aggression—The effects of foreign aggression on the Chinese—The Empress Dowager places herself at the head of the reactionary party—Decision of the Emperor on the advice of Kang Yu-wei to arrest the Empress Dowager—Yuan Shih-Kai entrusted with this plan—Virtual deposition of the Emperor by the Empress Dowager and flight of Kang Yu-wei—The Empress resumes the government.

“THE unchanging East.” To no country did these words apply more correctly than to the Celestial Empire. China seemed to have sunk into a kind of torpor from which she appeared unlikely ever to rouse herself. Methods suitable to the sixteenth century still continued in the nineteenth. Chinese soldiers still marched about armed with three-pronged pitchforks, and in some cases even with bows and arrows. The officers of the Chinese army were only required to know the Chinese classics, any knowledge of military tactics being considered quite unnecessary.

The civil officials were obliged to be thoroughly conversant with the works of Confucius, but any knowledge of modern methods of government was

deemed superfluous. The Chinese people, far from desiring to see Western ideas adopted in their country, heartily despised them.

To the great majority of Chinese the foreigner still remained the "Outer Barbarian," and in their eyes the great Russian Empire was but a petty state, tributary to the Dragon Throne.

As an illustration of this, mention may here be made that the Emperor Tung-chih, in giving his first audience to the foreign ministers accredited to his Court, received them in the Hall of Purple Lights, a building usually reserved for the Imperial receptions of vassal chiefs from Mongolia and Tibet.

The reign of the Emperor Tung-chih, 1861-1875, and the minority of the Emperor Kwanghsu, 1875-1889, were periods of absolute national stagnation, and observant foreigners freely advanced the opinion that China was a decadent country, destined to be partitioned amongst the European Powers.

The Chinese, however, soon proved themselves not to be a decadent nation, but merely a somnolent one. With the accession to full governing powers of the Emperor Kwanghsu, March 4, 1889, there came a partial awakening. The Emperor Kwanghsu was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable of the Manchu sovereigns. Immured from his earliest infancy within the walls of the Forbidden City, and lacking the slightest semblance of

European education, he was yet fully alive to the necessity of the adoption by China of Western methods, and also to a certain extent of Western civilisation, in order that she might occupy her rightful place in the Council of the Nations. The innately Liberal views of the Emperor were undoubtedly strengthened by the fact that his reign coincided with a period of foreign aggression in China. In 1884 there broke out the war with France, which resulted in the loss to the Celestial Empire of her Indo-Chinese dependencies. This was followed ten years later by the conflict with Japan, resulting in the loss of Korea, Formosa and Port Arthur.

In 1897, as compensation for the murder of two German missionaries, Germany demanded and obtained from China the cession of Kiaochau.

The culminating point of the aggression was reached in 1898, when Russia, who three years previously had taken the lead in forcing Japan to restore Port Arthur to China, compelled China to retrocede that port to the Russian Empire. The result of this move on the part of Russia was to force the necessity upon Great Britain to demand the lease of Wei-hai-wei.

It is not to be wondered at that, seeing his country threatened on all sides, the Emperor Kwanghsu became more and more convinced that, to save it from disruption, it would be expedient

for him to adopt Western methods of government and to organise both his army and navy on modern lines. He was still further strengthened in his conviction by his meeting in June 1898 with the Cantonese reformer, Kang Yu-wei, who became both his political coadjutor and personal friend.

Opinions have always been divided regarding the individuality of Kang Yu-wei. By some he has been thought a visionary, whilst others have considered him a self-seeker. Certain it is that he was possessed of considerable ability, and that he was genuinely patriotic. Stirred by the example of Japan, which in the comparatively short space of thirty years had been transformed from a mediæval state into a modern constitutional monarchy, Kang Yu-wei desired to effect a similar transformation in the Middle Kingdom, and he contrived to win the Emperor over to his ideas and to fire him with his enthusiasm. So well did he succeed in this, that between June 1898 and the September of the same year there appeared a series of Imperial edicts all working towards the fulfilment of his hopes.

The first edict abolished the ancient classical examination system, and was promptly followed by others ordering the adoption of a modern system of education and establishing a University in Peking organised on European lines.

Attention was also paid to the question of

military and naval reform, and Yuan Shih-Kai, now President of the Republic, at that time Judicial Commissioner of Chihli, was appointed to the command of the Peking Field Force with orders to carry into practice modern military reforms.

No question affecting the progress of the nation was left untouched by the Imperial reformer, and there seemed every likelihood that the Celestial Empire would in the very shortest time follow in the footsteps of the Land of the Rising Sun. Unfortunately, however, for China, the conditions in that country during the reign of Kwanghsu were very different to those prevailing in Japan at the commencement of the Meiji era.

In the first place, the reigning dynasty of China was of a race alien to the people over which it ruled, and in consequence of this, Kwanghsu had not so strong a claim upon the patriotism of the Chinese as Mutsuhito had upon the Japanese. Secondly, the powerful and patriotic feudal aristocracy, so much to the fore in the Japanese restoration, did not exist in China. In China the corrupt and often incompetent Mandarin stood in the place of the Japanese Daimyo of the restoration days, and whereas the Daimyo, imbued with the traditions of Bushido, was ready to yield up all his feudal powers to his sovereign, the Mandarin, anxious only for his own aggrandisement and

eager to fill his pockets at his country's expense, constituted the chief obstacle to its progress. Kwanghsu fully realised the strength of this opposition to his policy on the part of the official class, and he met it with an edict in which he professed himself ready to listen to all reasonable objections. Unfortunately for him, he quite counteracted the effect of this edict by peremptorily dismissing every official who dared to differ from him, and amongst these there were a few absolutely honest Conservatives whom he might with tact and patience have won over to his cause.

Intrigues against the Emperor on the part of the dismissed officials soon became rife, and the Iho Park, situated within the precincts of the Summer Palace, the residence during her retirement of the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, became the centre of these intrigues.

For some considerable time Tzu Hsi turned a deaf ear to the continuous suggestions on the part of the cashiered Mandarins that she should resume the reins of government, but eventually the action of the Emperor himself drove her into acceding to their wishes.

It was the firm belief of Kang Yu-wei, a belief amounting almost to an obsession, that the chief opponents to the policy of reform were the Empress Dowager and Yung Lu, the Viceroy of Chihli and her loyal adherent.

As regards the Empress Dowager, he had some justification for his convictions, but where Yung Lu was concerned his opinion was a totally erroneous one. Yung Lu combined the noblest character with great ability. Devoted though he was to the Empress Dowager, and fully cognisant of the very great influence he had over her, he, throughout his lengthy official career, only made use of his influence for the good of his country.

In addition, he was a sincere though moderate Liberal, and had been one of the first officials to bring Kang Yu-wei to the notice of the Emperor.

In spite of this, Kang Yu-wei incessantly urged upon the Emperor that the Reform policy would never succeed whilst the Empress Dowager retained her liberty and Yung Lu his life. For a time Kwanghsu hesitated, reluctant to repay with such ingratitude the woman who had raised him to the throne. Gradually, however, the breach between him and the Empress Dowager widened, and about the middle of September 1898 he decided to follow the advice of Kang Yu-wei. He selected as his instrument Yuan Shih-Kai, at that time Commander of the Peking Field Force, and therefore subordinate to Yung Lu. Kwanghsu believed Yuan Shih-Kai to be wholly devoted to his interests, and apparently was in total ignorance of the fact that the very closest friendship existed between the two men, a friendship sanctified by

the oath of blood-brotherhood which they had taken.

On the morning of the 22nd of September, his plans having taken definite shape, Kwanghsu summoned Yuan Shih-Kai to the palace and gave him his final instructions. He desired him to proceed with all speed to Tientsin and to arrest Yung Lu in his Yamen, and at once put him to death. He was immediately after to return to Peking at the head of 10,000 picked men from his own force and seize the Empress Dowager, imprisoning her within the Summer Palace.

After giving him these instructions, the Emperor handed to Yuan an edict appointing him Viceroy of Chihli in succession to Yung Lu. Yuan Shih-Kai departed forthwith to Tientsin, reaching that city about noon of the same day.

He proceeded at once to the Viceregal Yamen, and made his way instantly to the private apartments of Yung Lu, whom he addressed as follows: "Do you regard me as a faithful blood-brother?" "Of course I do," replied Yung Lu. "You well may, for the Emperor has sent me to kill you, and now instead I betray his scheme because of my loyalty to the Empress Dowager and my affection for you."¹ Yung Lu left at once by special train for Peking, and entered the presence of the Empress Dowager unannounced, and revealed the whole

¹ *China under the Empress Dowager*, p. 206.

plot to her. Tzu Hsi lost no time in deliberation. Summoning a secret meeting of the Grand Council, she laid all the facts of the plot before the councillors, and they with one accord begged her to resume the government.

The doom of Kwanghsu was sealed. At midnight the troops hitherto on guard in the Forbidden City were ordered to withdraw and were replaced by soldiers drawn from Yung Lu's own corps. At about 6 a.m. on September 23, the Emperor was seized by a detachment of guards and imprisoned in an Island Palace in the Forbidden City, and compelled to issue an edict handing over the government of the Celestial Empire to the Empress Dowager.

Thus the reign of Kwanghsu, which had opened with so much promise, came to a disastrous close, for although he nominally retained the throne, all real power had passed from his hands for ever.

His life was only spared owing to the appeals of certain officials, amongst them the generous-minded Yung Lu, who warned the Empress Dowager that the execution of the Son of Heaven was a step so drastic as to endanger her popularity.

Of the many leaders of the Reform party, Kang Yu-wei and his lieutenant, Liang Chi-chao, were able to escape, the former to Hong-Kong, the latter to Japan, but several other prominent reformers, including a brother of Kang Yu-wei,

suffered the extreme penalty of the law, dying bravely and declaring with their last breath their unswerving belief in the ultimate triumph of the cause of Reform.

The *coup d'état* of 1898 marks the commencement of the anti-Manchu movement which eventually culminated in the Chinese Revolution, for it transferred the leadership of the Chinese Progressives from Kang Yu-wei, the moderate Reformer, to Sun Yat-sen, the Revolutionist.

Reviewing Kwanghsu's short reign, it is not to be doubted that he made many mistakes, chiefly owing to the fact that the reforms he sought to bring about had not been sufficiently deliberated upon.

In spite of these grave errors, it would be unfair when taking into consideration, as we did in the earlier part of this chapter, the corrupt Court in which he was brought up, surrounded solely by eunuchs totally devoid of any semblance of modern education, to deny the character of the unfortunate emperor some elements of greatness.

Had he continued to reign, he might have succeeded in permanently reconciling the Chinese people to the Manchu dynasty. By his virtual deposition the downfall of that dynasty became merely a matter of time. The cause of Reform was destined to triumph in the end, but it was to be brought about at a heavy cost and by sterner means than by the stroke of the vermilion pencil.

CHAPTER II

The prestige of the Manchu dynasty lowered and endangered by its inability to resist foreign aggression—Empress Dowager decides on war against the Western Powers—Origin of the Boxer Society—Empress Dowager establishes it on legal basis—Entry of troops from the province of Kansu into Peking—Assassination of Mr. Sugiyama—Attack by the Boxers on the French Cathedral—Meeting of the Grand Council—Decision in favour of war—Assassination of the German Minister—Attack on the Foreign Legations by Boxers and Imperial troops—Empress Dowager issues secret edict ordering extermination of all foreigners in China—Terrible massacre of foreigners in Taiyuanfu—Defiance by Yuan Shih-Kai and other Viceroys of the Empress Dowager's commands and protection by them of foreigners in their respective provinces—Advance of international relief forces on Peking—Flight of the Court to Sianfu and entry of the allies into Peking.

WHEN the Empress Dowager again took up the reins of government she was confronted by an exceedingly difficult and dangerous political situation. By its inability to protect its possessions from foreign aggression, the Manchu dynasty had lost much of its former prestige in the eyes of its Chinese subjects. The conservative North was greatly incensed by the loss of Kiaochau and Port Arthur, while the more liberally inclined South deeply resented the overthrow of Kwanghsu and Kang Yu-wei and the consequent return to a policy of reaction. The earlier Manchu emperors had employed a strong hand and a sharp sword as the only means by which alien rulers could

govern the Chinese people, but at this juncture in Chinese history the hand was gradually growing weak and the sword rusty. The ominous murmur not heard since the Taiping revolt thirty-eight years earlier—"the Manchu dynasty has exhausted the mandate of Heaven, let us hurl the hated Tartar from the Dragon Throne and restore the rule of the sons of Han"—arose once more throughout the country.

No one realised more fully than the Empress Dowager the extreme peril to the dynasty, and she instantly grasped at the only chance of saving it from downfall by seeking to direct the wrath of the Chinese people into a different channel.

She endeavoured to divert their anger to the large foreign community in China, impressing upon her subjects that the surest way for the dynasty once more to prove deserving of their allegiance would be a successful war against the hated "foreign devils" who had filched from China so many of her former possessions.

At first Tzu Hsi limited her anti-foreign policy to annulling all those edicts of Kwanghsu which had aimed at the westernisation of China, but during the summer of 1899 she adopted a more militant programme.

It was at this critical moment that Prince Tuan, Kang Yi and other leaders of the reactionary party brought to the Empress Dowager's notice

the famous Society of Boxers, of whom it is imperative to give a brief description. The "I Ho Chuan," or "Society of Patriotic and Harmonious Fists," first made its appearance in 1895 in the Province of Shantung.

Its earliest leader claimed descent from Hung Wu, founder of the Ming dynasty, which rather suggests that in its infancy at any rate the society was not pro-Manchu.

Shortly before the Empress Dowager became acquainted with its existence, the society had, however, developed into a pro-Manchu and violent anti-foreign organisation. Its banners bore the inscription, "Protect the Tsing dynasty, exterminate the foreigner."

The Boxers believed themselves to be under the special protection of the "Jade Emperor," the supreme deity of the Taoists, and they were fully convinced that certain spells of which they possessed the secret would render them immune from death on the battle-field.

Knowing the Empress Dowager's very high standard of intelligence, it seems almost incredible that she should have allowed herself to be persuaded into a belief in the magical powers of the Boxers; but nevertheless this was so, as is clearly proved by her subsequent actions.

Towards the end of the year 1899 she issued an edict ordering the formation of a National Militia

throughout the country, which was synonymous with establishing the Boxer movement on a legal basis.

This step naturally called forth protests from the different Legations in Peking, to which the Tsung-li-Yamen (the Foreign Office) replied evasively that orders would be sent to the Provincial Governors to suppress the Boxers. In some cases the orders were formally sent, but were followed up by secret instructions to the different Viceroys to disregard them, and to allow the Boxer movement to continue.

From this moment the situation in Peking grew daily more menacing to the foreigners. On June 10, 1900, by command of the Empress Dowager, there arrived in the city a large force of fierce Mohammedan soldiers from Kansu, whose leader, Tung Fu-hsiang, was noted for his extreme anti-foreign views. On the following day Mr. Sugiyama, Chancellor of the Japanese Legation, was assassinated outside the Yung-ting Gate by a body of these Mohammedan soldiers, and on the 13th the French Cathedral was attacked and set fire to by a large force of Boxers, many native converts perishing in the flames. The Imperial forces had not been associated with the attack on the cathedral, but in order that they should in the future be in a position to assist the Boxers the Empress Dowager, on June 20, summoned a

special meeting of the Grand Council to determine how the proposed war against the world should be conducted.

In spite of her warlike intentions, the Empress Dowager had, previous to the Council, yielding to the representations of Yung Lu, promised that the Foreign Legations should be safely escorted to Tientsin before the outbreak of hostilities.

This humane concession did not, however, fall in with the views of Prince Tuan and the other leaders of the extreme anti-foreign faction.

Immediately the Council had assembled, Prince Tuan laid before the Empress Dowager a dispatch which he declared he had that morning received from the Foreign Ministers, demanding the abdication of the Empress Dowager, the restoration of the Emperor Kwanghsu, and the degradation of the newly appointed heir apparent, the son of Prince Tuan himself.

In point of fact this document was forgery, but the Empress Dowager believed in its authenticity, and her fury was instantly aroused. To quote her own words : " The insolence of these foreigners passes all bounds; how dare they question my authority ? let us exterminate them before we eat our morning meal." ¹ Vainly did Yung Lu, supported by the Emperor Kwanghsu, who was present at the Council, plead for the safe escort of

¹ *China under the Empress Dowager*, p. 265.

the Legations, asking what lustre would be added to the Imperial arms by the slaughter of a handful of isolated Europeans.

The Empress remained immovable, and her only reply was to the effect that Yung Lu was free to offer the Legations safe escort to Tientsin, but that she herself would not support him in carrying this plan into execution. During the debate of the Council, events outside had already assumed an aspect so threatening that any efforts on the part of Yung Lu to prevent bloodshed had become useless.

The Tsung-li-Yamen had already made attempts to bring about the withdrawal of the Foreign Legations to the coast with the result that, on the morning of June 20, the German Minister, Baron von Ketteler, volunteered to go to the Foreign Office for the purpose of negotiating these departures. This offer, involving great personal danger to Baron von Ketteler, was accepted by his colleagues, and he almost immediately set out in a sedan chair for the Foreign Office. He had hardly crossed the boundary of the quarter in which the Legations were situated when he encountered a picket of Manchu soldiers belonging to Prince Tuan's own corps. They were under orders to shoot every foreigner who crossed their path and, alas! had no hesitation in carrying these orders into effect.

Baron von Ketteler was instantly shot dead in

his sedan chair by a soldier named En Hai, and on the afternoon of that same day the Chinese troops opened a terrific fire on the Austrian Legation. Prince Tuan had now attained his aim, and the Chinese Government had committed itself beyond recall. The memorable siege of the Peking Legations, which was destined to have such a far-reaching effect on the future of the Celestial Empire, had commenced.

The Empress Dowager now issued a secret edict which was sent only to the Viceroys and Governors of the eighteen provinces, commanding them to slay all foreigners resident within their jurisdiction.

This edict, however, was intercepted before leaving Peking by two officials named Yuan Chang and Hsu Ching-cheng, both members of the moderate party, and the word "protect" inserted by them in place of the word "slay."

One of the first to receive the edict was Yuan Shih-Kai, at that time Governor of Shantung.

Yuan, though probably very doubtful as to the validity of the word "protect," never for one moment hesitated as to which course to pursue. He not only accorded the foreign community in Shantung his protection, but mercilessly crushed the Boxer movement throughout his province. Yuan Shih-Kai's example was promptly followed by all the Viceroys of the southern provinces, and

Liu Kun-yi, Viceroy of Nanking, sent a telegram to the Empress Dowager, that whilst he would be only too ready to lead his troops North if it were in order to repel a foreign invasion, he absolutely refused to lend his forces for the purpose of massacring a few helpless foreigners. At Taiyuanfu, the capital of the province of Shansi, there occurred a massacre rivalling in bloodshed the worst horrors of the Indian Mutiny. Yu Hsien, the Governor of this province, was bitterly anti-foreign, and on receiving the Imperial edict with its altered wording immediately sent a memorial to the Empress Dowager asking for an explanation. To this she replied: "I command that all foreigners, men, women and children, old and young, be summarily executed; let not one escape, so that my empire be purged of this noisome source of corruption, and peace be restored to my loyal subjects."¹

Yu Hsien lost no time in carrying this terrible command into effect. He induced practically the whole foreign community of Taiyuanfu to take refuge in his Yamen, and then put them all to death, sparing not even the women and children.

Yuan Chang and Hsu Ching-cheng paid for their gallant attempt to save the foreigners with their own lives. They were both executed by order of the Empress Dowager. Meanwhile in Peking, Yung Lu, reviled as a traitor, and in constant danger of assassination at the hands of

¹ *China under the Empress Dowager*, p. 207.

Prince Tuan's party, never relaxed his efforts to secure peace. In spite of his enemies he had the satisfaction of seeing his efforts crowned with success, and on July 18 the Empress Dowager, who had never wholly lost her confidence in him, granted him permission to conclude an armistice with the Legations.

Unfortunately, almost simultaneously with the conclusion of this armistice, a dispatch arrived at the Court of Peking from Yu Lu, the Viceroy of Chihli. The contents of this dispatch announced a victory at Tientsin by the Viceroy's troops against the allied force marching to the relief of the Legations. Though absolutely untrue, the Empress believed the news to be genuine, and was encouraged by it to resume hostilities as early as August 6. Meanwhile the inmates of the besieged Legations, though suffering great privations and in constant and deadly peril, continued their heroic defence. Time after time they drove back Tung Fu-hsiang's troops, although he himself had boasted that a very few days would see the entire Legations effaced from the earth.

Seeing the very slow progress of the Boxer arms the Empress Dowager began to lose faith in their strength, and again commenced to incline towards a peaceful settlement, but she had missed her opportunity, as help for the besieged Legations was close at hand.

On August 14, Duke Lan, a prominent leader of

the anti-foreign party, rushed into the presence of the Empress Dowager exclaiming: "Old Buddha, the foreign devils have arrived." Close upon his heels followed Kang Yi with the momentous news that a large force of, as he called them, "turbaned soldiers" was encamped in the park of the Temple of Heaven. Their information was correct. The relief force commanded by Count von Waldersee had at last arrived. Realising that the position had become desperate, the Empress Dowager lost no time, and during that night made all preparations for flight. Shortly before dawn on the 15th she fled from Peking in the disguise of a Chinese peasant woman, taking with her the Emperor and the heir apparent.

Prince Tuan made good his escape at the same time, but Yung Lu, chivalrous and loyal even in this extremity, remained behind and made a last desperate effort to rally his troops and assure his Imperial mistress a safe retreat.

The Imperial family continued its flight, arriving first at Kalgan and then proceeding to Taiyuanfu, where it was joined by Yung Lu.

After a short rest at Taiyuanfu the Empress Dowager moved on to Sianfu, the capital of Shensi, where she intended to reside with her Court during exile.

No doubt as they were speeding towards the "City of Continuous Peace" the thoughts both of the Empress Dowager and of Yung Lu must

have gone back to that other flight to Jehol thirty-nine years earlier. At that time the Empress Tzu Hsi had been only Yehonala, the Yi concubine of the Emperor Hsien Feng, and Yung Lu the playmate of her childhood and an obscure officer in the Imperial Guard.

Their united efforts had successfully fought the intrigues of the usurping Regents, and together they had carried out the daring *coup d'état* which made the young widow of Hsien Feng ruler of the Middle Kingdom. Thirty-nine years ago they had also fled from a foreign army, but the disaster of 1861 was in no way comparable in magnitude to that of 1900.

In 1861 the victories of the foreign troops had not extended beyond the Chinese City, and only the Summer Palace had been looted.

In 1900 the Tartar City also was occupied by the enemy, and the halls where Chien Lung and Kanghsi had once held Court now re-echoed to the tramp of foreign soldiers.

It seemed as though the Empress Dowager's sway had reached its end, and had she not been gifted with the most masterly mind and the most wonderful power to attract even her enemies this would undoubtedly have been the case.

In truth, she was destined not only to return in triumph to the Forbidden City, but to win the respect, and in some cases even the affection, of the European community in China.

CHAPTER III

Empress Dowager realises mistakes in her foreign policy—Turns to Yung Lu for advice—Punishment of Boxer leaders—Decision in favour of policy of reform—Peace signed—Return of the Court to Peking—Death of Yung Lu—Yuan Shih-Kai succeeds him as intimate adviser to the Empress Dowager—Reforms introduced by Empress Dowager—Illness of the Emperor Kwanghsu—Prince Pu Lun and Prince Pu Yi suggested as candidates for the throne—Disagreement on the subject between Yuan Shih-Kai and Empress Dowager—Empress Dowager decides in favour of Pu Yi—Death of the Emperor Kwanghsu, followed shortly after by death of the Empress Dowager—Criticism of the characteristics of the Empress Dowager—Accession of Prince Pu Yi to the throne—Prince Chun declared Regent during his minority—Regent's hatred of Yuan Shih-Kai—Disgrace and exile of Yuan Shih-Kai by the Regent—Adoption by the Regent of reactionary measures and appointment by him of members of the Imperial Clan only to principal posts of government—Intense anger of the Chinese nation at this policy—Revolutionary party headed by Sun Yat-sen greatly strengthened—Meeting of the Tzu Cheng Yuan—Interval of calm—Discovery of revolutionary plot at Wuchang followed by military revolt—Flight of the Viceroy—Occupation by the rebels of the three cities and election by them of Li Yuan-hung as commander—Provisional Government formed at Wuchang—More cities join rebellion—Regent dispatches northern army and naval squadron to Hankow—Capital of Shensi declares in favour of rebels as does also naval squadron before mentioned—Recall of Yuan Shih-Kai by Regent and his appointment as Viceroy of Wuchang—Garrison of Lanchow demands Constitution—Constitution granted and resignation of the Premier, Prince Ching—Yuan Shih-Kai elected Prime Minister.

DURING her exile at Sianfu the Empress Dowager engaged in serious reflection, and very soon began to recognise the mistakes of the past. She saw clearly that the only means by which she could

hope to regain the confidence of the foreign community in China, and thereby of the European Powers, would be by the drastic punishment of Prince Tuan and the other instigators of the attacks upon the Legations. She also realised most thoroughly that the one chance of retaining the throne for the Manchu dynasty was to conciliate the Chinese nation by the adoption of the policy of reform advocated by Kwanghsu. As on so many previous occasions, the Empress Dowager again in this crisis sought the wise counsel of Yung Lu.

In obedience to her request for his advice Yung Lu replied as follows—

“Old Buddha, there is only one way—you must behead Prince Tuan and all the rest of the Princes and Ministers who misled you, and then you must return to Peking.”¹

A few days later the Empress Dowager ordered the imprisonment pending execution of Prince Tuan, of Duke Lan and of other leaders of the Boxer party. In the cases of Prince Tuan and of Duke Lan, the capital sentence was commuted to one of banishment for life to Turkestan, but Prince Chuang was ordered to commit suicide, while Yu Hsien and Chi Hsiu, two other Boxer leaders, were beheaded.

In addition to this proof of her desire to retrieve

¹ *China under the Empress Dowager*, p. 352.

past wrongs as far as possible, the Empress Dowager immediately decided to conclude peace with the European Powers, and invested Prince Ching and Li Hung Chang with the full right to effect a settlement. To emphasise still further her extreme regret for the recent outbreak, she issued edicts thanking the southern Viceroy for having protected the foreigners, and promoted Yuan Shih-Kai from the Governorship of Shantung to the Viceroyalty of Chihli.

The treaty of peace was definitely signed on September 7, 1901, and on January 6, 1902, the Imperial Court returned to Peking.

It was to a greatly altered Peking that the Empress Dowager returned on that winter morning.

The railway, which now pierced the wall of the Chinese city, and by which she re-entered her capital, was symbolical of the changed attitude of the Chinese towards foreign methods.

As she was carried through the streets of the Tartar city in her sedan chair, bowing graciously to the numerous foreigners in the crowd, it must have seemed almost incredible to the latter that this kindly, smiling lady, looking out upon them from the yellow curtains, should be identical with the bloodthirsty tyrant who had ordered their wholesale extermination but two years before.

The guns under Count von Waldersee had

succeeded where the edicts of Kwanghsu had failed, and China had awakened to the urgent necessity of reform.

The general demand throughout the empire was for the adoption of Western methods of government and for a system of education conducted on Western lines.

The Empress Dowager now put herself at the head of the Reform party, and in the interval between the years 1902 and 1908 issued a series of edicts so broadminded in conception and so far-reaching in effect as to quite extinguish the comparatively mild efforts formerly attempted in that direction by the Emperor Kwanghsu.

Reviewing many errors in the past, the Empress Dowager realised as one of the most serious causes of the weakness of the Ta Tsing dynasty the edict issued by the first Manchu emperor forbidding the marriage between Manchus and Chinese.

This prohibition had prevented the amalgamation of the races, and had branded the line of Nurhachu as an alien one in the eyes of the majority of its subjects. The Empress promptly modified this prohibition, decreeing that it should henceforth only be valid in cases of members belonging to the Imperial house. On this occasion she also withdrew the command making the wearing of the queue obligatory, and allowed it to be purely optional for each individual.

In 1903 the Empress Dowager sustained a severe loss in the death of Yung Lu, who for over forty years had served her with unswerving loyalty, though never failing boldly to speak his mind when his views differed from hers.

There was no one really fit to fill his place in the estimation of the Empress Dowager, but in his closest personal and political friend, Yuan Shih-Kai, who was at this moment promoted from the Viceroyalty of Chihli to the Presidency of the Waiwupu, the reorganised Foreign Office, she found many qualities most useful to her in the difficult task of carrying her new policy into effect.

Yuan threw all his customary energy into furthering the Empress Dowager's projects of reform, and employed as his lieutenants a band of brilliantly clever young Cantonese who had been educated abroad, amongst these the subsequently famous Tang Shao-yi.

During his tenure of office in Shantung and Chihli Yuan Shih-Kai had raised a considerable force of soldiers, for the training of whom he had employed foreign instructors.

The Empress Dowager at once decided that this force, destined ultimately to become the famous "Northern Army," should become the nucleus of an army trained according to the most advanced modern system.

In the following years no less than fourteen divisions were recruited.

In 1906 the Empress Dowager crowned her work of reform by issuing an edict which promised Constitutional Government in nine years from that date.

Yuan Shih-Kai had been the author of the scheme now put forward by the Empress Dowager, and it gives wonderful proof of his cautious and far-seeing statesmanship. The first move was to be marked by the establishment of Provincial Assemblies in each of the eighteen provinces, to be followed a few years later by the founding of a National Consultative Assembly in Peking. Finally, nine years having sufficed to bring home to the Chinese people the advantages accruing from this improved system, a Parliament in the accepted sense of the word was to be elected, and full Constitutional Government granted to the nation. It was very unfortunate for the success of this scheme that the Empress Dowager's vindictive nature did not allow her to pardon Kang Yu-wei and Liang Chi-chao, the original founders of the Constitutional Reform Movement. She could not bring herself to forgive these two men for plotting to dethrone her. They were therefore left in exile, a fact which fostered the feeling of disaffection still prevailing in Southern China.

The year 1907 brought with it the last of the great Reform edicts, which did away with poppy cultivation throughout China; and, simultaneously with this edict, a treaty was concluded with Great Britain having for its object the gradual cessation of the opium traffic between India and China. Yuan Shih-Kai was the prime mover in this salutary reform.

Early in 1908 the declining health of the Emperor Kwanghsu made it necessary to take into consideration the selection of a new heir to the throne—all the more as the degradation after the Boxer revolt of the former heir apparent son of Prince Tuan had put an end to his candidature. The choice lay between two members of the Imperial family, the one was Prince Pu Lun, a grandson by adoption of the Emperor Tao Kwang, and the other, Prince Pu Yi, a child of five, the son of Kwanghsu's brother, Prince Chun, and a maternal grandson of Yung Lu.

Yuan Shih-Kai supported the claim of Prince Pu Lun, partly for personal reasons and largely because he honestly believed him to be the ablest and most progressive of the younger Imperial Princes.

The Empress Dowager, however, decided in favour of the boy Pu Yi, wishing, as she said, hereby to prove her gratitude to the memory of Yung Lu for his lifelong devotion to her person.

Pu Yi was accordingly proclaimed heir apparent. The unfortunate Emperor Kwanghsu breathed his last on the 14th of November, 1908, and the Empress Dowager, who had been failing in health for a considerable time, passed away on the following day.

We have already dealt fully with the character of Kwanghsu; the Empress Dowager presents a far more complex study.

Tzu Hsi has been compared to most of the great women who have occupied thrones in the East and West; perhaps the most apt comparison has been that likening her to Catherine the Great. She shared with the Empress Catherine her loyalty in friendship and her vindictiveness as an enemy.

Her main characteristic was her extraordinary adaptability to change, so strikingly exemplified in her complete volte face from an extreme policy of reaction to one of advanced reform.

Prince Pu Yi was proclaimed emperor immediately after the death of Kwanghsu, under the name of Hsuan Tung, but being a minor, his father, Prince Chun, assumed the Regency.

Up to the time of his becoming Regent, Prince Chun had not played any part which could have brought him much before the public; the only facts generally known with regard to him in Peking were his strong affection for his unfortunate brother Kwanghsu, and consequently his hatred

of Yuan Shih-Kai, who had, by his conduct towards the Emperor in 1898, caused his subsequent misery.

Yuan Shih-Kai was fully aware of Prince Chun's irreconcilable attitude, and it was this knowledge which had prompted him to oppose the choice of Prince Pu Yi as emperor, necessitating as it did the elevation of Prince Chun to the Regency.

Subsequent events proved how justified were Yuan Shih-Kai's forebodings. In January 1909 the Regent issued an edict in the name of the Boy Emperor, dismissing Yuan from all his posts, divesting him of all his honours, and finally exiling him to his home in Honan.

At first there were many sympathisers with the Regent's motives in dismissing Yuan, but as the real trend of Prince Chun's policy became more widely known their number diminished and gradually dwindled away. One of the outstanding features of the Empress Dowager's programme of reform had been to place the Chinese and Manchu officials in the service of the State on a footing of absolute equality.

The Regent most unwisely proceeded to restore the former prominence of the Manchu element, and conferred the highest offices of state on his own close relatives or on unreliable and incompetent Manchu officials. The disastrous effect of this change of policy soon became apparent.

Able Chinese officials, hitherto loyal servants of the dynasty, began to waver in their allegiance, and gradually turned towards the Tung Meng Hui (the sworn brotherhood), a revolutionary organisation of which Sun Yat-sen was the leader.

This disaffection promptly spread to the troops of the Lu Chun or Modern Army, amongst which Sun Yat-sen had for years carried on a violent propaganda.

The Regent opened the first session of the Tzu Cheng Yuan, or the Consultative Senate, in state on the 3rd of October 1910.

The opening ceremony took place amid what appeared to be great rejoicing, and Prince Chun was greeted with every sign of outward loyalty by the members of the Assembly, but to many who watched his progress to the Senate and his return to the Forbidden City it was obvious that the rejoicings were forced and the loyalty hollow.

Subsequent events in China must recall to many the early chapters of the French Revolution, for, just as the opening by Louis XVI of the French States General in 1789 had marked the prelude to that Revolution, so the opening by Prince Chun of the Tzu Cheng Yuan in 1910 was the raising of the curtain on the Chinese Revolutionary Drama.

The first demand of the Tzu Cheng Yuan was the appointment of a regular Cabinet in place of the Grand Council.

The Regent complied with this perfectly reasonable demand, but completely nullified the good effect produced by his acquiescence in appointing to the post of China's first Prime Minister Prince Ching. This man was generally and quite correctly looked upon as the most reactionary of the Imperial Princes, and had, in addition, shown himself most incompetent in matters of any great importance.

With the exception of a rebellion in Szechwan, due mainly to local causes, the summer and early autumn of 1911 proved peaceful in China.

This peace, however, was purely superficial, and was really the deceptive calm which so often in the East heralds the coming storm. The Manchu dynasty had in truth exhausted the Mandate of Heaven, and the hour of its downfall was close at hand.

On October 9, 1911, the accidental explosion of a bomb in a house in the Russian Concession at Hankow revealed the existence of a revolutionary plot in that city.

Jui Cheng, the Viceroy of Wuchang, ordered over thirty arrests in connection with the plot, telegraphing immediately afterwards to the Regent to inform him that he had completely crushed the rebels. This information, however, was, to say the least, premature, for at eight o'clock on the evening of October 10 the troops of the

modern army, forming the garrison of Wuchang, suddenly rose in revolt, and, sweeping aside the loyal troops, a handful in number as compared to themselves, commenced a furious attack upon the Viceregal Yamen. A loyal regiment of cavalry attempted to defend the representative of its sovereign, but Jui Cheng, realising that resistance was fruitless, fled under cover of darkness to a gunboat at anchor some distance up the Yangtze. The triumphant rebels elected as their leader Colonel Li Yuan-hung, who had previously commanded the 21st Mixed Brigade at Wuchang.

This choice was to be fraught with momentous consequences for China. Li Yuan-hung was a native of Hupeh and a most able officer, who had received his military training partly in Japan. He had not joined the rebels until after the actual outbreak, and, whilst believing as honestly as Sun Yat-sen himself that China's only chance of progress lay in the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, his political views differed widely from those of the leader of the Tung Meng Hui. For the moment both worked for a common object, but there is every reason to believe that whilst Sun Yat-sen desired a Republic, Li Yuan-hung inclined towards a Constitutional Monarchy with a Chinese ruler at its head.

By the evening of October 11 the Revolutionaries were supreme in the three cities of Wuchang,

Hankow and Hanyang, and had occupied the great arsenal of Hanyang, containing a large supply of arms, ammunition and money.

In addition to these successes the Revolutionaries had also won over the Hupeh Provincial Assembly, which had joined their ranks, and its President, Tang Hua-lung, a most distinguished classical scholar, had been appointed by Li Yuan-hung to one of the most important posts in the Provisional Government.

With the capture of the "three cities" the great Province of Hupeh came under the rule of Li Yuan-hung and the revolutionary army, and there now remained for him to gain the support of as many of the other seventeen provinces as possible and, thus strengthened, to await the counter-move on the part of the Manchus.

He had not long to wait, for the Regent, realising the necessity for prompt action if he wished to crush the revolt, dispatched two divisions of the northern army commanded by a Manchu, General Yin Chang, Minister of War, to Hankow on October 15, and also sent out a naval squadron under the command of Admiral Sah Chen-ping. All these measures, however, did not prevent the Chinese Republic proclaimed by Li Yuan-hung from gaining a firm foothold.

On October 18, the important treaty port of Ichang went over to the Revolutionaries. On the

22nd of that month Changsha, the capital of Hunan, followed suit, as did also one day later the town of Kiukiang. The climax was reached shortly afterwards by Sianfu, the capital of Shensi, declaring for the Republic.

The sailors of Admiral Sah's squadron, then lying off Wuchang, saw their commander safely on shore and then replaced the Dragon Flag by hoisting the White Star on a blue ground, first Ensign of the Chinese Republic.

The defection of Sianfu, which was followed by a terrible massacre of Manchus in that city, struck terror into the hearts of the Imperial clansmen. Up to the present open disaffection had been limited to the southern provinces, but it now became evident that it was spreading to the North.

From the commencement of the Wuchang revolt on October 10 Prince Chun was forced into the realisation of the danger threatening the dynasty, and with this realisation the conviction was thrust upon him that there was one man only, the man whom he hated and whose official career he had destroyed, who could save it from downfall.

As early as October 14, and therefore prior to the fall of Sianfu, Yuan Shih-Kai, the exile of Changtsefu, was recalled to save those who had dismissed him. On the 14th of October the Regent issued an edict recalling Yuan Shih-Kai,

and appointing him Viceroy of Hukuang and *Generalissimo* of the naval and military forces engaged in the investment of the three cities. Yuan Shih-Kai, after a fortnight's delay, in which he was evidently weighing the pros and cons of the posts offered to him, telegraphed his acceptance of the offices, but he had hardly left his exile before circumstances arose which called him to far greater power.

A telegraphic memorial from General Chang Shao Tseng, in command of the 20th Division at Lanchow, reached Peking early in November, demanding the immediate granting of a constitution to China. The Regent was obliged to comply with this demand. The constitution embodied as its two principal articles, first, that no member of the Imperial Clan should be eligible for office in the Cabinet, and second, that the right of electing the Premier should be vested in the Tzu Cheng Yuan.

The first of these articles naturally compelled Prince Ching to resign the Premiership and rendered necessary the election of a new Premier.

The Tzu Cheng Yuan held a special session on the 8th of November, 1911, and unanimously elected Yuan Shih-Kai as first Constitutional Prime Minister of the Chinese Empire.

CHAPTER IV

Contradictory traits in Yuan Shih-Kai's character—Analysis of his policy—His secret negotiations with Sun Yat-sen and their failure—The Revolution—Yuan Shih-Kai's opportunity—Recall of General Yin Chang—Yuan Shih-Kai determines to crush the Republican party—Capture of Hankow and Hanyang—Fruitless negotiations between Yuan Shih-Kai and Li Yuan-hung owing to disagreement on Yuan's part with Li Yuan-hung's suggestions—Realisation by Yuan of the impossibility of saving the Manchu dynasty—Failure to conclude foreign loan—Revolutionaries generally in the ascendant—Revolt reaches Nanking—Political and military conditions in that city—Disloyalty of troops trained on modern principles and their disarmament by the Viceroy—Re-armament of the modern troops and their withdrawal from Nanking—Viceroy's attempt to surrender Nanking overruled by the Tartar General—General Chang Hsun arbiter of the fate of Nanking—His character and policy.—Chang Hsun's offer to sell Nanking refused—Decision on his part to support the dynasty—Reign of terror in Nanking—Advance of the Republican forces—Siege of the city—Storming and capture by the Republican forces of Purple Mountain—Terms of peace arranged—Evacuation by the Imperialists of Nanking and occupation of the city by the Republicans—Effect of these events on Yuan Shih-Kai's policy—Armistice concluded at Wuchang—Objections by Republican leaders to Wuchang as seat of the Peace Conference proposed by Yuan—Conference transferred to Shanghai—Appointment of Tang Shao-yi as principal Imperial Delegate—His relations with Yuan—Intrigues against Yuan and attempted assassination—His position strengthened—Demand of a Republic by Imperialist Generals—Abdication of the Manchus—Revolutionary Assembly meets at Nanking—Sun Yat-sen elected Provisional President of the Chinese Republic—Political effects of the change of government—Sun Yat-sen resigns, recommending Yuan as his successor—His election as Provisional President—A defence of his conduct—The task before him.

AMONGST the many complex characters figuring prominently in Chinese history, there is none

presenting so many contradictory traits as the character of Yuan Shih-Kai. His career betrays several examples of unscrupulous actions when wishing to advance his aims and still further ascend the ladder of fame, yet, in spite of this, it also affords proof of extraordinary loyalty; as in the case of his refusal to accept the Viceroyalty of Chihli at the cost of the execution of his friend Yung Lu.

It is especially in the part played by Yuan Shih-Kai in the Chinese Revolution that these conflicting traits come into prominence.

Opinions remain divided as to Yuan's real policy as Premier, some holding that he remained loyal in word and deed to the Manchu dynasty, others again maintaining his policy to have been a treacherous one, since it allowed him to see the fall of the dynasty when it was in his power to save it. In face of this reproach, it is only fair to state that Yuan's strong sentiment of loyalty towards the Ta Tsing dynasty received its death-blow at the time of his dismissal by the Regent and of the abandonment of all his cherished schemes of reform. His equivocal position was rendered still more difficult by his unswerving belief in a monarchical form of government.

His real wish was for a Constitutional Monarchy which, whilst retaining the Manchu dynasty on the throne "as" (to quote his own words) "an

emblem of monarchy," would vest the entire executive government of the empire in the Prime Minister, in whom he saw no less a person than himself.

At this very critical period of his career he never swerved in his loyalty to his country and his countrymen, and was resolved by all means in his power to protect both from the horrors of civil war.

It is in the nature of things that a man of such far-reaching ambitions should be determined to take advantage of the state of chaos then prevailing to further his own plans, which culminated in his desire for supremacy in the Middle Kingdom.

For the moment the Premiership satisfied him, but there is little if any doubt that he looked upon that office merely as a stepping-stone to one far more august in character. Even in the days of his extreme favour with the Empress Dowager, there were some of his enemies who openly accused him of designs upon the throne. There is no reason to treat these accusations as anything but calumny, but the apparent loyalty to the Ta Tsing dynasty which Yuan displayed after his dismissal by Prince Chun is open to doubt.

We have Dr. Sun Yat-sen's authority for stating that some time before the outbreak of the Revolution Yuan Shih-Kai made certain proposals to him. Their exact nature has remained a secret,

but from the mere fact that Sun Yat-sen would only have entertained a scheme having for its object the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty we must conclude that Yuan, when approaching him, was actuated by the same motives.

Yuan was perfectly aware that, with the fall of the Manchu dynasty, the throne could easily be gained by a strong man who could count upon the allegiance of the army, and with this knowledge came the conviction that the flower of the modern army in China, which owed its whole being to him, would follow him to the death. If any of these motives were at the back of his mind when he approached Sun Yat-sen, he was doomed to instant disappointment, for the leader of the Tung Meng Hui was a convinced Republican.

In any case this can only be looked upon as a temporary set-back. Being indispensable to the Manchus he was in a position to make his own terms, and it was his action in making his acceptance of the Wuchang Viceroyalty conditional on the recall of General Yin Chang from the command of the Imperial forces in Hupeh which so strongly revived the doubts as to his loyalty to the Ta Tsing dynasty.

Yuan knew Yin Chang to be a most able and competent officer who had received his military training in Germany and, as President of the Republic, he has since given proof of his confidence

in him by appointing him Chief of the General Staff, a post he occupies at the present moment.¹

What reason, therefore, could Yuan have had for insisting upon his recall at that time beyond the fact that he was of Manchu origin, and therefore likely to be a loyal adherent of the House of Nurhachu?

With that wonderful foresight which has been such a great asset to Yuan Shih-Kai throughout his notable career, he anticipated the moment when it might be imperative for the good of his country in the first place, and for the furtherance of his own ambitions in the second, to abandon the Manchus to their fate; and in such a crisis he desired to have, as Commander of the Imperial forces, a man of his own race who would unquestioningly obey his orders.

This man he found in the person of General Feng Kuo-Chang, who was of purest Chinese origin.

The Premiership and the supreme command of the Imperial forces placed Yuan Shih-Kai in the exceptional position of military dictator.

Immediately after forming his Cabinet, Yuan Shih-Kai issued orders to General Feng Kuo-Chang to press forward the Imperialist attack on the "three cities," which resulted on November 11 in the capture and destruction of Hankow, this being followed on November 27 by the capture of the city and arsenal of Hanyang.

¹ Since writing this Yin Chang has been transferred to the Vice-Presidency of the Presidential Bureau, and a Director of Military and Naval affairs.

Between the fall of Hankow and the capture of Hanyang, Yuan dispatched envoys to Wuchang entrusted with the mission to try and bring about a peaceful settlement on the terms of a Constitutional Monarchy, the Emperor Hsuan Tung remaining the figurehead. Li Yuan-hung's only reply to these proposals was the suggestion that Yuan should depose the reigning dynasty and invest himself with the Imperial dignity. This suggestion, which was in striking contrast to the Republican sentiments previously expressed by Li Yuan-hung, although very flattering to his pride, did not commend itself to Yuan Shih-Kai, and that for a very obvious reason.

Whilst enjoying immense popularity in the North, Yuan Shih-Kai was still execrated south of the Yangtze, owing to his deception of the Emperor Kwanghsu and the Cantonese Reformer, Kang Yu-wei.

Yuan foresaw that any attempt on his part to obtain recognition as Emperor in the southern provinces would be met by strong resistance.

In spite of his refusal at that moment to give Li Yuan-hung's suggestion that he should seize the throne himself serious consideration, Yuan very soon realised that it had become impossible to preserve the Manchu dynasty.

In the first place, his efforts to conclude a loan of six millions sterling with a Foreign Syndicate

had been unsuccessful, and therefore the necessary funds to carry on the military operations were lacking; and the second obstacle lay in the fact that the Revolutionary cause had triumphed in all the southern and in most of the northern provinces. The irrepressible tide of revolt was gaining hold throughout the country, and finally reached the only hitherto quiet spot in Southern China, the historic city of Nanking. The political and military conditions prevailing in Nanking towards the end of October 1911 were peculiarly complex in character.

The Government was, so to speak, a dual one, for though the supreme authority was vested in the Viceroy Chang Jen-chun, this authority was to a certain extent shared by the Tartar General Tieh Liang, an ex-Boxer and a bitter enemy of Yuan Shih-Kai.

As regards the military conditions, there were three distinct forces in Nanking which consisted of 5500 modern trained Chinese commanded by General Hsu Shao Cheng, 6000 old style Chinese commanded by General Chang Hsun, and 2000 Manchu soldiers under the command of the Tartar General Tieh Liang.

The Viceroy was fully alive to the fact that General Hsu Shao Cheng and the modern troops under his command were completely seditious. He promptly decided upon their disarmament by

means of the very simple expedient of withdrawing the bolts from their rifles.

Unfortunately this bold stroke by Chang Jen-chun was followed by a fatal act of weakness on his part. The disarmed soldiers, knowing the Manchu portion of the garrison to be bitterly hostile to them, pleaded for the restoration of their arms as a protection against a possible massacre, promising if they were restored to them to retire peacefully to Molingkuan, about fifteen miles south of Nanking. In a moment of weakness the Viceroy relented, and on October 29 General Hsu Shao Cheng and his troops, fully armed and with a plentiful supply of ammunition, evacuated Nanking and encamped at Molingkuan.

On November 6, the Viceroy received the royal authorisation to nominate Chang Chien, a very able man, and at the time President of the Provincial Assembly, Governor of Nanking.

This step, which was equivalent to surrendering Nanking to the Revolutionaries, was absolutely vetoed by the Tartar General Tieh Liang, who declared emphatically that the Imperial edict was a forgery.

It was, however, neither with the Viceroy nor the Tartar General that the fate of Nanking rested, but with the Commander of the old style Chinese troops, General Chang Hsun, who has since gained such notoriety.

In Chang Hsun we have a typical example of the Eastern soldier of fortune, totally uneducated, unscrupulous, yet undoubtedly possessing a certain strength of purpose and personal magnetism which has made him an object almost of worship to his soldiers.

His policy, a very simple one, was to throw in his lot with whichever party seemed the most likely one to come into power. His opportunity was not long in coming.

On November 8, a sudden attack was made on the Viceregal Yamen by a portion of the Chinese garrison of the city, which was repulsed by Chang Hsun, who, taking advantage of the disturbance, proclaimed martial law in Nanking and offered the city to the Revolutionaries. They declined the offer, whereupon Chang Hsun immediately proclaimed himself an Imperialist. This was the signal for a reign of terror in Nanking.

On that same 8th of November, Chang Hsun sent his soldiers to make an active search for Revolutionaries throughout the city, and at night no less than four hundred executions took place; any man found not wearing the queue, the Manchu badge of Imperialism, being mercilessly put to death.

Whilst these horrors were taking place at Nanking, General Hsu Shao Cheng had withdrawn from Molingkuan to Chinkiang, where he openly declared in favour of the Republic and announced

his intention to attempt the capture of Nanking. On November 17 the advance guard of his forces came into collision with the troops of Chang Hsun, and on the 24th he arrived at the gates of Nanking at the head of an army of 15,000 men, reinforced by a naval squadron from Shanghai. The siege of Nanking now commenced in deadly earnest, accompanied by most severe fighting, remarkable bravery being shown on both sides.

With all their courage, however, Chang Hsun's old style "braves" were no match for the trained soldiers of Hsu Shao Cheng, and early on the morning of December 1 the Republican Commander issued orders for the storming of Purple Mountain, the key to Nanking.

The indomitable bravery with which this most perilous order was carried out proves conclusively that when properly led by a commander in whom they have confidence, Chinese soldiers can die as bravely as any army of the world.

In face of a terrific fire, with their comrades falling all around them and with practically no cover to protect them, the Republican troops charged unflinchingly up the steep slopes.

By noon the White Star of the Republic floated from the summit of Purple Mountain and Nanking was practically won.

By the following morning terms of peace had been agreed upon, General Hsu Shao Cheng

generously undertaking to protect the Manchu inhabitants of the city and to allow General Chang Hsun to march out at the head of his army.

On the evening of that day Nanking was evacuated by General Chang Hsun, and General Hsu Shao Cheng had entered into occupation.

The marching out from Nanking of General Chang Hsun, at the head of his old style braves, is a symbol of the passing away for ever of the cruel, barbaric, yet picturesque China, whilst the occupation of the city by General Hsu Shao Cheng and his following of smart, modern soldiers marks the advent of the new China arising from the ashes of bygone days and conscious of its strength and power.

The Republican party gaining immensely in prestige by the fall of Nanking, Yuan Shih-Kai saw the futility of any further attempt to save the Manchu dynasty. His next move therefore was to open negotiations with the Republican leaders. At first sight this volte face on Yuan's part would appear strange in a man known to be such a strong supporter of the monarchical principle. It is, however, quite a popular belief amongst his own countrymen that Yuan, who was fully conversant with the history of Napoleon I and III, meant to emulate their example, knowing that in both cases the Chief Magistracy was but a stepping-stone towards the throne.

Whatever Yuan's real thoughts and intentions, he kept them a close secret.

On November 30, Yuan concluded an armistice with General Li Yuan-hung, who was still in possession of Wuchang, and immediately after proposed that a Peace Conference should be held in that city, appointing as Chief Imperialist Delegate his old subordinate in Chihli, Tang Shao-yi.

The leaders of the Tung Meng Hui, however, who were controlling from Shanghai the affairs of those provinces which had accepted the Republican rule, insisted upon the conference being held in the latter city. The reason for this demand was that the action of Li Yuan-hung, in first suggesting that Yuan Shih-Kai should seize the throne and then declaring himself ready to accept a Constitutional Monarchy under the Manchus, had cast serious doubts upon his loyalty and had given grounds to the fear that a conference in Wuchang might result in the Republic being signed away.

Yuan Shih-Kai offered no resistance to the Peace Conference being held in Shanghai. The principal delegate on the Republican side was Wu-Ting-fang, formerly Chinese Minister to the United States, whilst, as has been said before, Tang Shao-yi represented the Monarchy. The ostensible object of Yuan in arranging this conference was to negotiate an agreement with the Republican leaders, which, while it retained the Manchu dynasty on the

throne, would ensure to the Chinese Empire a Liberal constitution and a better government than it had hitherto enjoyed. The first action of Tang Shao-yi, however, was to declare himself at the opening meeting of the conference in favour of a Republic as being the form of government most suitable for China, and his next to agree to the election of a National Convention to decide the question whether the Manchu dynasty should continue to reign or whether it should be deposed and a Republic take its place.

Tang Shao-yi firmly relied upon being able to influence the elections so as to assure a Republican majority in the Convention, and there is no doubt that he only agreed to the National Convention scheme because he felt convinced that that body would decide in favour of the Republican form of government, and also that from the beginning of the conference until the day it broke up he was acting in the interests of the Republican and not of the Imperialist party. This is proved by his abandoning the Manchu cause in agreeing to the evacuation by the Imperialist forces of Hankow and Hanyang. When this was known the Imperialist Generals protested and the conference broke up. Tang Shao-yi had, however, ruined whatever chance the Manchus may have had of retaining the throne; for the northern troops were gradually withdrawn from Hanyang and Hankow, and the Revolutionary

party were encouraged by Tang Shao-yi's support to demand the immediate abdication of the Emperor, without even the formality of a National Convention. Henceforth the Republic was assured, and this mainly through the action of the principal Imperialist Delegate to the Shanghai Conference, who was also the nominee of Yuan Shih-Kai and one of his closest friends.

The question now arises, was Yuan in any way a party to Tang Shao-yi's action at the conference, or did the latter betray Yuan as well as the Manchus? Now some of the most distinguished members of the foreign community in China take the view that Yuan Shih-Kai was, from the time when he accepted the Premiership until the day the Emperor abdicated, absolutely loyal to the Manchu dynasty. They further hold that Yuan only accepted the Republic when he found it impossible to retain the monarchy; and that Tang Shao-yi, by his action at the Shanghai Conference, betrayed not only the Manchus, but his friend and patron as well. Taking all facts into consideration, the most plausible conclusion to arrive at is that Yuan was not loyal to the monarchy, else he would not have appointed Tang Shao-yi Chief Imperial Delegate to the Shanghai Conference, for, even previous to his departure from Peking for Shanghai, Tang Shao-yi had made no secret of his sympathy with the Republican cause.

If, however, Yuan Shih-Kai was all along acting secretly in the Republican (and incidentally in his own) interests, his reason for appointing Tang Shao-yi becomes quite clear, for Tang Shao-yi was an intimate friend of his, a Cantonese, and *persona grata* with the revolutionary leaders, themselves mostly natives of Canton. He was therefore a most suitable intermediary to negotiate with the Republicans not on behalf of the Manchus, but on behalf of Yuan Shih-Kai himself, and so to arrange matters with the Revolutionary leaders as to ensure that when the Chinese Republic was an accomplished fact, Yuan Shih-Kai should be its first President.

It is, therefore, a fair assumption that, so far from Tang Shao-yi betraying Yuan by his action at Shanghai, that action was a prearranged affair between the two men, and further, Tang Shao-yi only accepted the idea of the National Convention because he quickly realised how the Convention could be used to serve Yuan's purpose. It was a foregone conclusion that the Convention would contain a Republican majority (had they thought otherwise the Republican leaders would never have suggested the idea); it would also contain a large number of representatives from Northern China, and it must be remembered that it was in the North that Yuan's influence was greatest.

The Convention, had it met and declared for a

Republic, would have had the important duty of electing the first President of that Republic, and as it was practically certain that the Northern and Central China delegates at least would have voted *en bloc* for Yuan Shih-Kai, his election would have been a certainty. But circumstances soon arose that led to the complete abandonment of the Convention scheme and caused instead the immediate abdication of the Ta Tsing dynasty.

In the first place, as already pointed out, the extreme Republicans were encouraged by Tang Shao-yi's attitude at Shanghai to demand that the Emperor should abdicate at once. This demand was placed by Yuan before the Empress Dowager Lung Yu,¹ who had by this time taken the Regent's place and who, after some hesitation, consented to it. Hitherto the demand for the Emperor's abdication had only come from the Revolutionary side.

But events soon took place which made the immediate removal of the Manchu dynasty as necessary to Yuan Shih-Kai himself as to the Republicans. The circumstances were as follows :

On the fall of Nanking, Tieh Liang, the Tartar General and Yuan's old enemy, fled to Peking, and almost directly after his arrival began to intrigue against Yuan Shih-Kai. The result of his intrigues were soon made manifest in the stiffening

¹ Widow of the Emperor Kwanghsu.

attitude of the Imperial clan towards the Revolutionists, and the withdrawal by the Empress Dowager of her promise previously given to abdicate without the formality of a National Convention.

Further than this, the younger Imperial Princes openly characterised Yuan as a traitor and demanded the immediate resumption of hostilities against the Republicans.

The extreme Revolutionary party were also restless and dissatisfied, and their dissatisfaction culminated in an attempt on January 16, 1912 to assassinate Yuan; no wonder that the latter soon realised that both the success of his plans and his own safety demanded the immediate abdication of the Manchu Emperor and the simultaneous proclamation of a Republic. Though the Manchus could not hope to fight Yuan openly, they could easily have reached him by means of an assassin.

For a short time the fate of the Manchu dynasty seemed to hang in the balance, but Yuan Shih-Kai held the winning cards.

In the first place, a memorial signed by forty-six of the Imperialist Generals had reached the Court at Peking requesting the abdication of the Emperor and the establishment of a Republic, and secondly, the Chinese troops were greatly in majority in Peking, and these were to a man devoted to Yuan. Yuan was therefore in a position to enforce upon the Empress Dowager the advice he had given her,

namely, to issue an edict in the Emperor's name, by which he and his dynasty should abdicate the Dragon Throne.

But there was no need to use force, the Manchus bowed to the inevitable, and on February 12, 1912, the Empress Dowager issued an edict in the name of the Emperor Hsuan Tung, by which he and his family surrendered for ever the Dragon Throne and the vast empire won by their ancestors.

The Emperor himself announced in this abdication edict that the Republic would be the future form of government for China, and authorised Yuan Shih-Kai to organise it.

In order to gain a better understanding of the methods Yuan Shih-Kai employed in the formation of this government, it will be necessary to touch briefly upon the period previous to the abdication.

When Nanking had fallen into the hands of the Republicans, their leaders decided that it should become the capital of that part of the country which had accepted their rule.

Towards the end of December of that year an assembly composed of elected delegates from all those provinces which had accepted the Republic met in Nanking, their duty on this occasion being to elect a Provisional President.

The only man eligible for such a post, in view of his having suffered exile and risked death in the

cause of the Republic, was Sun Yat-sen; and on December 29 the Revolutionary Assembly unanimously elected him Provisional President of the Chinese Republic.

It must have been a proud moment in the life of this great patriot when, on New Year's Day of 1912, he made his state entry into Nanking. The city around him teemed with the memories of a glorious past. It was in Nanking that the Buddhist priest Chu Yuan-chang had raised the standard of revolt against the degenerate descendants of Kublai Khan and had founded the glorious dynasty of the Mings; here also, but forty-six years previous to Sun Yat-sen's entry, Hung Hsiu-tsu had founded the dynasty of the Great Peace (Taiping), and now Sun Yat-sen could justly feel himself one with these heroes of bygone days and hope to earn as full a share of the gratitude of his countrymen.

Immediately on assuming office, Sun Yat-sen proceeded with the formation of his Cabinet, and on Yuan Shih-Kai the duty devolved to co-operate with him in founding a durable Republican administration. The political situation immediately subsequent to the abdication was briefly this :

All southern provinces enthusiastically greeted Sun Yat-sen as their President; but in the North there were many difficulties, for though the northern provinces had been willing immediately after the abdication to accept the Revolution, they

absolutely refused to recognise Sun Yat-sen as their leader.

This objection was in part due to their jealousy of the South, and even more to the fact that their rooted conservatism would never permit them to accept a Cantonese Radical as President.

They thus played into the hands of Yuan Shih-Kai, recognising him as the only other man capable of leadership.

Sun Yat-sen was now at the parting of the ways, and the gravest issues depended upon his decision.

Being above all things a patriot in the truest sense of the word, he recognised that insistence on his part to retain office would provoke a civil war likely to prove disastrous to his party owing to the superiority of the northern troops over those ready to espouse his cause.

Without hesitation he adopted the only possible course and one which did him the highest credit, and on February 14 not only placed his resignation in the hands of the Nanking Assembly, but himself suggested Yuan Shih-Kai as his successor.

The members of the Assembly regretfully decided to act upon this advice, and, meeting in special session on the following day, unanimously elected Yuan Shih-Kai to the Provisional Presidency. To all who have followed the various phases of Yuan Shih-Kai's career, the part which he played in the fall of the Manchu dynasty may appear equivocal,

and yet, may there not have been some deep-rooted cause for his actions which would throw a redeeming light upon them?

Yuan was bent upon Reform in the widest sense of the word, and felt that all real progress in China would be impossible so long as the throne was occupied by the decadent and corrupt descendants of Nurhachu. Moreover, could he have prevented the fall of the dynasty, it would have been at the cost of a civil war beside which the Taiping Revolt would have paled into insignificance.

With the retirement of Sun Yat-sen, Yuan Shih-Kai had attained his immediate goal—the Provisional Presidency; it now remained for him to consolidate his position and to raise a new edifice of state in place of that which the Revolution had destroyed.

CHAPTER V

Concessions made to the Manchu dynasty on its abdication—Yuan Shih-Kai Provisional President—Chaotic conditions in the provinces—Lack of funds—Yuan's limited authority—Dispute between Yuan and the Tung Meng Hui respecting seat of government—Compromise agreed upon—Mutiny and departure of northern troops from Peking—Inauguration of the President—Yuan Shih-Kai's courage in peril—Tang Shao-yi appointed Prime Minister—Attempt by him to negotiate loan with the Four Power Syndicate—Fall of Tang Shao-yi and its consequences—Lu Cheng-hsiang Premier—His resignation—Appointment in his place of Chao Ping Chun—Effect of his government—Divergence of opinions between him and the Revolutionary party—Yuan's attitude—Strong military position of the Tung Meng Hui—Its waning influence in the Council of the Government—Plots to overthrow Yuan Shih-Kai—Plotters cowed by President's drastic action—Visit to Peking of Sun Yat-sen—*Generalissimo* of the southern forces resigns—Disbands his army and subsequently visits Peking—Yuan's position strengthened—General Election—Amalgamation of the Tung Meng Hui and other political parties under the name of the Kuomintang—Kuomintang scores majority at the polls—Meeting of Parliament—Kuomintang's distrust of Yuan—Kuomintang selects Sung Chiao-jen as candidate for Premiership—Assassination of Sung Chiao-jen—Yuan charged with knowledge of the crime—Complete breach between him and the Kuomintang—A conflict of principles.

THE terms granted to the fallen dynasty by the Revolutionists were extremely generous.

The Emperor Hsuan Tung, in spite of his abdication of the throne of China, was to be allowed to call himself Manchu Emperor and to enjoy the rank and privileges of a foreign sovereign resident on Chinese soil. He was further given the Summer Palace as a permanent residence, and was

to be permitted to surround himself there with all the pomp and splendour of his more prosperous days. The allowances formerly made by the Emperor to the Manchu bannermen were now to be continued by the Republic; the Manchu population were to be put on a footing of equality as regards rights with the Chinese, and, in conclusion, the Republic undertook the task of completing the mausoleums of the Emperor Kwanghsu and the Empress Dowager.

Such were the conditions as regards the fallen dynasty when the supreme power of the State was vested in the person of President Yuan Shih-Kai. Had Yuan Shih-Kai not been gifted with wonderful self-confidence and indomitable courage, he might well have been appalled by the magnitude of the task before him. China was in a state of chaos. The Viceroys and Governors of the old regime had disappeared from the eighteen provinces, and had been replaced by the Tutuhs (Military Governors) of the Republic, men either self-appointed or nominated to their posts by the Revolutionary soldiers. These so-called Military Governors were for the most part absolutely ignorant of their duties, or incapable of carrying them out in an honest manner. Some of these Tutuhs who wished to act fairly, as they thought, towards the province over which they were governing, appropriated the revenues for that particular province only, whereas those whose

integrity was more questionable allowed the revenues to find their way into their own pockets. There was scarcely one province which remitted any part of its taxes to the Treasury in Peking, and the Central Government was consequently deprived of a considerable portion of its usual revenue. Yuan Shih-Kai's Presidency was practically limited to the provinces of Chihli and Shantung, and he exercised no authority outside these limits.

To render his position still more equivocal, he very soon after assuming office as President found himself involved in what threatened to become a serious dispute with the leaders of the Tung Meng Hui. The Revolutionary party, in which the influence of the South predominated, desired that Nanking should henceforth be known as the capital of the Republic, and that the President's residence should be transferred to that city. Yuan Shih-Kai strongly opposed this suggestion on the grounds of the great and unnecessary expense involved in the change; his real objections, however, were due to his conviction that his residence in the South would put him in the power of the Revolutionary party and prevent him from carrying out his own system of government. Eventually a compromise was arrived at by which Yuan Shih-Kai was to be inaugurated Provisional President in Nanking, but was to return immediately afterwards to Peking, which was to remain the capital any way for the

time being. This agreement produced great satisfaction in the South, and shortly afterwards a deputation was sent to Peking by the Nanking Assembly, which was to act as escort to Yuan on his journey to the latter city. This journey was, however, prevented on the eve of Yuan's departure by a mutiny of the soldiers of the third division of the northern army, hitherto considered his most reliable troops. After looting Peking they departed laden with plunder for their native province, Honan. This rising necessitated Yuan's presence in Peking.

At his solemn inauguration on March 10, 1912, in the hall of the Waiwupu in Peking, Yuan Shih-Kai's life was in gravest peril. By the departure of the Third Division from Peking, the military defence of that city was virtually in the hands of the Manchu soldiers of the Imperial Guard, whose sympathies were naturally not on the side of the Republic or its President. A slight hint to these men from the Imperial Clan would have sufficed to bring about a terrible tragedy in Peking. The incentive, however, was not given, and Yuan's escape from a situation of gravest danger was undoubtedly due to the wonderful moral courage he displayed, and his refusal to look upon the Manchu element as inimical to him. Most men in his perilous position would have hurried Chinese troops to Peking and attempted to disarm the

Manchu soldiers. Yuan, however, not only allowed the Imperial Guards to retain their important position, but on many occasions made them act as his escort, thus proving his trust in them and winning for himself their admiration and loyalty. Yuan's first move after his inauguration was to issue a Presidential Mandate appointing Tang Shao-yi Prime Minister.

The new Premier soon succeeded in forming a cabinet in which the Tung Meng Hui predominated, but which also included as members Chinese officials who had held office under the Empire. The most important amongst these was Tuan Chih-jui, Minister of War and a close friend of Yuan's. General opinion held that the Government had come to stay, but Tang Shao-yi himself caused it to fall in a very short time. His first very necessary duty on taking up office was the conclusion of a foreign loan, funds being urgently needed by the new Republic. To secure this object the Premier opened negotiations with the "Four Power" Syndicate which was represented by bankers of Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States. The Syndicate dictated its own conditions, which, not being acceptable to the Premier, caused him to take a very unwise and not very creditable step. He approached a Belgian Syndicate before breaking off negotiations with the Four Power group. When this became generally

known, a great outcry was raised against the Premier, which resulted in his resignation and in that of his Tung Meng Hui colleagues in the Cabinet. With the resignation of the Cabinet all attempts to float a loan failed for the time being.

With the fall of Tang Shao-yi the strength of the Tung Meng Hui began to wane, and the history of the Chinese Republic entered upon another phase. Tang Shao-yi's immediate successor in the Premiership, Lu Cheng-hsiang, Chinese Minister to Russia, had but a brief tenure of office and was soon followed by Chao Ping Chun, a Honanese who was a devoted adherent of Yuan Shih-Kai, having served under him in Chihli.

From the moment of the appointment of the new Premier, who was influenced entirely by the President, it became obvious that Yuan's ideas of the constitution of a government differed widely from those put forward by Sun Yat-sen and his party.

The Tung Meng Hui desired a United States of China in which each of the eighteen provinces would be self-governing; Yuan Shih-Kai, on the contrary, insisted upon a constitution vesting the entire power in his own person, and giving him the right to appoint and dismiss the Provincial Governors at his pleasure.

From the moment that Yuan realised how completely the political ideals of the Revolutionary

party were at variance with his own he determined to exterminate it.

But the crushing of the Tung Meng Hui was not so easy of accomplishment, for it could still count upon the support of the southern army, and particularly upon the garrison of Nanking, 15,000 strong and commanded by Huang Hsing, Sun Yat-sen's lieutenant. Yuan Shih-Kai exercised the utmost circumspection in the methods he employed, and slowly but surely forced the various members of the Tung Meng Hui holding official positions in Peking, to send in their resignations, filling up their places almost immediately with men of his own way of thinking.

The relations between the President and Sun Yat-sen still remained cordial on the surface, but in point of fact each was awaiting his own opportunity.

Amongst the more irresponsible members of the Tung Meng Hui, the belief was gaining ground that the President's strength and grip upon the country were on the wane, and in the autumn of 1912 they commenced plotting to overthrow him. Subsequent events showed them, however, to be entirely misguided.

In the early part of December, General Chang Chen-wu and General Fang-wei arrived at Peking from Wuchang, ostensibly on a mission from the Provisional Vice-President of the Republic, General

Li Yuan-hung, to Yuan Shih-Kai. This mission was a mere pretext, for both Yuan Shih-Kai and Li Yuan-hung knew these two men to be conspirators against the Government, and arranged between themselves that, late one night, when returning from a dinner given in their honour by the President, they should be seized and executed. This plan was carried out to the letter.

This drastic measure, so strongly reminiscent of the methods of the Empress Dowager, was naturally condemned by many of the members of the National Council now in session in Peking; but, brutal though it undoubtedly was, it effectively cowed the would-be Revolutionists, and convinced them that Yuan Shih-Kai's reserve of strength was not in any way exhausted.

At the end of December, Sun Yat-sen paid a visit to Peking and was received with the highest honours by the President. His visit was followed shortly afterwards by that of Huang Hsing, who had resigned his post of *Generalissimo* of the southern forces at Nanking and had disbanded the greater part of his army. By the disbanding of these troops, the only revolutionary army of any strength left in the country was that quartered at Wuchang and commanded by Li Yuan-hung, who had now openly thrown in his lot with Yuan Shih-Kai. The President could, therefore, count upon his support and that of his army whenever he

considered the moment had come for the final crushing of the Tung Meng Hui. The General Election of the new Chinese Parliament took place in March 1913, and resulted in a large majority for the Kuomintang, a new party which owed its existence to the amalgamation of the Tung Meng Hui with several other political parties. The new Parliament held its opening meeting in April under anything but favourable conditions.

The fact that the President did not open it in person, and that his message was read by his secretary, admitted of one construction only: it clearly showed that a complete breach between him and the Kuomintang was imminent.

The leaders of the Revolutionary party were now no longer in any sort of doubt with regard to the real trend of Yuan Shih-Kai's policy, and consequently looked upon him with profound distrust, a feeling which soon developed into bitter hatred.

The programme of the Kuomintang included a system of party government as we understand it in England, and its members considered that their victories at the time of the elections entitled them to expect that they should be selected by the President to form a Cabinet.

They selected as their candidate for the Premiership Sung Chiao-jen, one of the leading spirits in the Revolution, a former Minister of Education in the Cabinet of Tang Shao-yi. Sung Chiao-jen

accordingly left his residence at Shanghai for Peking amidst the good wishes of his friends, and with every prospect of a brilliant career. Whilst waiting at Shanghai railway station for the train which was to convey him to the capital he was shot and mortally wounded by the bullet of an assassin, and succumbed to his injuries a few hours later. The bullet which put an end to this promising life also struck the final blow to any remnant of co-operation between Yuan Shih-Kai and the Kuomingtang.

The members of the Revolutionary party believed that they saw the hand of the President in the murder of the man he knew to be one of his ablest opponents, and they resolved to drive Yuan from office, or at any rate to force a constitution through Parliament which would render him a mere cipher.

Henceforth it was to be war *à l'outrance* between the ideals of democratic Republicanism as represented by the Kuomingtang, and the thinly veiled autocracy which was the political goal of Yuan Shih-Kai.

CHAPTER VI

Yuan Shih-Kai and the assassination of Sung Chiao-jen—Fictitious strength of the Kuomintang—Rejection of the Russo-Chinese agreement—Financial crisis—The Crisp Loan—Negotiations opened with the Quintuple group—Agreement signed—Its rejection in Parliament—Ratification of the loan by the President—Country on the brink of civil war—Outbreak of the war “for the punishment of Yuan”—Fall of the Kuomintang—Presidential election—Victory of Yuan Shih-Kai and Li Yuan-hung—Inauguration of the President—Recognition of the Republic by Foreign Powers—Dissolution of the Kuomintang—Arrival of Li Yuan-hung in Peking—Meeting of Administrative Council—Dissolution of Parliament—Yuan Dictator—Republic or Empire?

To what extent the charges brought against the President by the Kuomintang were justified in fact will never be known; and there is no possible doubt that Sung Chiao-jen's death was of advantage to Yuan Shih-Kai also. Considerable suspicion attached to the latter in the matter; at the same time the way in which Sung Chiao-jen met his death does not suggest that it was of Yuan's doing. He would more probably have allowed Sung Chiao-jen to reach Peking, and then to have had him arrested on a charge of sedition, execution following.

At the moment of Sung Chiao-jen's death the Kuomintang possessed a large majority in Parliament and, relying upon that and upon the support of the southern troops, its leaders had great

hopes of achieving the overthrow of Yuan. They opened their parliamentary campaign by loudly demanding the dismissal from office of the Premier, Chao Ping Chun, whom they accused unhesitatingly of being the direct instigator of the assassination of Sung Chiao-jen. To this demand Yuan turned a deaf ear.

Having failed in this attempt to weaken Yuan Shih-Kai's position, the Revolutionary leaders' next move was to secure the rejection by Parliament of the Russo-Chinese agreement respecting Outer Mongolia, which province had, shortly after the fall of the Monarchy, proclaimed its independence and practically placed itself under the protection of Russia.

By this strategy the leaders of the Kuomintang hoped to force the President into a quarrel with Russia, but, far from achieving their object, they actually improved the relations between Yuan Shih-Kai and the Russian Government. At the time of the rejection of the Russo-Chinese agreement the Republican Government was in great financial difficulties.

After the fall of Tang Shao-yi, various attempts were made to negotiate a loan with the Five Power group, but all ended in failure. The Powers represented in this group would only agree to the loan on certain conditions at that moment wholly unacceptable to China, and at the same time they

strongly opposed any attempt on the part of the Republic to conclude a loan with another Syndicate. In spite of all opposition the Chinese Government in the early spring of the year 1912 succeeded in raising a loan of two million sterling with the English firm of Birch, Crisp & Co., secured on the salt gabelle.

This loan, however, only brought temporary relief, and the early stages of the struggle between the Kuomintang and Yuan Shih-Kai saw China on the verge of bankruptcy. Realising that funds were urgently needed for the continuance of his fight to retain his supremacy, Yuan Shih-Kai again applied to the Five Power group for a loan; but the negotiations were impeded by Russia's insistence on an agreement with respect to Mongolia before the signature of the proposed loan.

It was then that the fatal mistake of the Kuomintang in rejecting the agreement, which had only been arrived at after such protracted negotiations between China and Russia, convinced the Government of the latter country that it was essential to support the authority of Yuan Shih-Kai. Russia immediately withdrew her opposition to the granting of the proposed loan, and on April 26, 1913, the agreement was signed, the signatories being the Chinese Minister of Finance and the representatives of the Five Power group.¹ The

¹ Russia and Japan had joined the group, and the United States withdrawn

loan represented the sum of twenty million sterling, the security again being the salt gabelle.

Yuan Shih-Kai's diplomatic triumph in carrying these complicated negotiations to a successful conclusion placed the Kuomintang in a most difficult position. It sought by means of its large majority in Parliament to carry the rejection of the loan on the grounds that its conditions were derogatory to China, but this attempt was of no avail, Yuan Shih-Kai ratifying the agreement in defiance of the legislative vote.

The pent-up fury of the leaders of the Kuomintang could now no longer be kept within bounds, and every one realised fully that China was on the brink of a civil war.

On May 4, Yuan Shih-Kai issued a Presidential Mandate proclaiming his intention of maintaining order under all conditions.

About the middle of July fighting broke out in the province of Kiangsi between the northern and southern troops, and a few days later Huang Hsing proclaimed the independence in Nanking of the southern provinces. This step marks the commencement of the "war for the punishment of Yuan" entered on by the leaders of the Kuomintang, which was destined to terminate so disastrously for their own party. Viewed superficially, the strength of the two armies was practically equal. In the North, Yuan Shih-Kai reigned

supreme, and he could also depend upon the loyal support of the provinces of Hupeh, Chekiang Kwangsi, Yunnan, Kweichau and Szeschwan.

The rebels counted amongst their allies the provinces of Kiangsu, Kiangsi, Anhui, Fukien and Kwangtung, and a body of levies actually raised whilst the revolt was in progress. The province of Hunan preserved its neutrality. The Provisional Vice-President, Li Yuan-hung, who, assisted by his army of 50,000 men securely held Wuchang, was prepared, if necessary, to fight in the interests of the President.

In addition to the forces supporting both sides, there existed at Yenchau, in Shantung, a body of soldiers 25,000 strong commanded by General Chang Hsun, who had figured in a somewhat dubious light in the siege of Nanking. This soldier of fortune, as we have described him in a previous chapter, was once more prepared to offer his services to the highest bidder. Yuan Shih-Kai, by reason of the loan just granted, was in a position to secure his co-operation on terms more acceptable to Chang Hsun than any the Kuomintang could put forward, and, in addition to this, managed, with his wonderful knowledge of human nature, to appeal to Chang Hsun's pride as a soldier, and thereby gain his personal regard and loyalty. He promoted Chang Hsun to the full rank of General, and commanded him to march against Nanking

and make an attempt to recapture that city for the Government.

He thus gave him the opportunity to wipe out the memory of his former defeat, which had never ceased to rankle in his heart, and Chang Hsun immediately headed his troops on their march swearing eternal loyalty to Yuan Shih-Kai. The rebels started hostilities by sending a large force under the command of General Chen Chi-mei, one of the principal leaders of the Kuomintang, to occupy Shanghai. The actual occupation of the city was accomplished without fighting, but when the invaders attempted the capture of the Kiagnan Arsenal they met with most serious resistance.

The small garrison of northern troops in the arsenal made a gallant defence, and with the assistance of a naval squadron stationed in the Yangtze under the command of Admiral Tseng Ju Cheng, drove the rebels back in confusion.

A few days later northern reinforcements reached Shanghai and completed the routing of the rebels, who fled in all directions, some being forced into the foreign concessions, where they were immediately disarmed by the International Municipal Council. Admiral Tseng, to whom the main credit of this victory was due, had received his training in the British Navy. He was immediately promoted Governor of Shanghai, and he

gained further laurels a few days later by the surrender, after a short bombardment, of the Wusung forts at the mouth of the Yangtze. This severe reverse to the rebel forces was followed by one even more serious in its results.

On August 4, the garrison of Canton, hitherto loyal to the Kuomintang, suddenly mutinied, and, having killed its commander, cancelled the declaration of independence made by Chan Kwing-ming, Tutuh of Kwangtung, who, recognising his danger, at once fled to Hong-Kong.

These events were followed a few days later by the entry into Canton of the commander of the Kwangsi troops, Lung Tsi Kwang, who occupied the city in the President's name and assumed the Tutuhship. Thus the province of Kwangtung, formerly the stronghold of Sun Yat-sen and his party, passed into the sway of Yuan Shih-Kai.

The defection of Fukien and the occupation of Nanchang, the capital of Kiangsi, by the northern forces, added two further victories to the Presidential cause. Nanking held out longest, but on September 6 that city was captured by General Chang Hsun, whose troops acted up to their reputation for ferocity, and stained their victory with unjustifiable bloodshed. Amongst the atrocities committed by these unruly soldiers there figured prominently the shooting of several harmless Japanese residents, an act which threatened to

bring about serious complications between Japan and China.

The fall of Nanking dealt the final blow to the Kuomintang, for, with its leaders in exile abroad and its army dispersed the temporary majority it retained in Parliament was of no importance. Remembering the complete victory gained by the Kuomintang between 1911 and 1912, it is difficult to realise that within less than two years it had practically ceased to exist. In a very great measure the leaders of the Kuomintang were responsible for its short period of existence. They started from the point of view that a state religion would prove incompatible with a Republican form of government, and, on coming into power, their foremost aim was to bring about the complete separation of the Confucian religion from the State.

This policy, which sought to strike a blow at the most ancient and revered traditions of the country, met with the bitterest antagonism on all sides, and finally destroyed any chance of the Kuomintang obtaining an enduring influence with the people.

Barely had the rebellion been crushed than Yuan Shih-Kai compelled Parliament to hold an immediate Presidential Election in spite of the fact that the draft for the new Constitution had not yet been completed. This election took place on October 6, and Yuan succeeded, by methods of coercion, in securing his own election to the

Presidency and that of Li Yuan-hung to the Vice-Presidency.

The 10th of October 1913, the second anniversary of the outbreak of the Revolution, was selected for the formal inauguration of Yuan Shih-Kai as President of the Chinese Republic. The ceremony took place in the Taihotien Hall of the Forbidden City, in the presence of the Cabinet, of deputations from both Houses of Parliament, and also of the Foreign Ministers, who had all formally recognised the Republic on the day of Yuan's election as President.¹ After the ceremony Yuan proceeded to the gateway of the hall and reviewed the troops of the northern army from the same spot from which, when the Manchu dynasty was at the zenith of its power, the great Emperor Chien Lung had reviewed his troops on their return from their victories in Turkestan.

One cannot help speculating upon the nature of Yuan Shih-Kai's thoughts as he stood upon this historic spot. Did they go back to those not far distant days when he had entered the Taihotien Hall as Councillor and yet a mere subject of the all-powerful Empress Dowager, or did his imagination conjure up dreams of glories to come and of a day when the Imperial Mantle would descend upon him, and he be hailed by the proud name of Son of Heaven?

¹ America had recognised the Republic in the May of that year.

In spite of the hopelessness of their plight, the Kuomintang, shortly after the inauguration of the President, made one more desperate effort to wreck his influence by attempting to pass a constitution through Parliament which would so diminish his powers as to make him a mere figurehead in matters of state.

Yuan Shih-Kai's position, however, was now unassailable, and on November 4 he gave the *coup de grâce* to the Kuomintang by the issue of a Presidential mandate unseating the three hundred Members of Parliament belonging to that party, and commanding the closing of its various branches in the provinces. Immediately after this drastic measure, the President formed an Administrative Conference, eight members of which he nominated himself. The Cabinet had the right to nominate two members and each minister to nominate one, and in addition to these, the governors of each of the eighteen provinces were to provide two members, and Mongolia and Tibet were called upon to send four representatives each.

The Council held its first meeting on December 16, in the Presidential Palace at Peking. The opening ceremony over, a very interesting address was delivered by Yuan Shih-Kai, who was accompanied by Vice-President Li Yuan-hung. A few days later the President received a memorial signed by the Tutuhs of the eighteen provinces petitioning for the immediate dissolution of Parliament.

As a mere matter of form the President handed this document to the Administrative Conference for decision, and every member of that body, all of whom were enthusiastic supporters of Yuan Shih-Kai, after a perfunctory discussion decided in favour of the petition.

Yuan Shih-Kai early in the New Year issued a mandate dissolving Parliament on the grounds that it was impossible to gain a quorum. The extinction of the Kuomintang and the dissolution of Parliament have placed Yuan Shih-Kai in the position of Dictator, and the question naturally forces itself upon us, has he now reached the final goal of his ambitions? Will he be content to continue his rule as President, or will he boldly throw aside his professions of Republicanism and attempt to found a new dynasty?¹ We know him to have frequently professed his strong belief in a Republican form of government, but the high favour he is constantly showing to Kang Yu-wei and his party, all avowed Monarchists, may well cast doubts upon the value of this profession. The most significant sign of his aims for the future may be interpreted from his proposal to revive the religious ceremonies in the Temple of Heaven, and himself to officiate at them. The office of Pontifex Maximus would

¹ Since the above was written Yuan Shih-Kai has adopted a form of government which, although ostensibly based on that of the United States, bears very striking resemblance to the old Imperial System.

of necessity raise him and his heirs to Imperial rank, and would convey, to the minds of the great majority of Chinese, the conviction that Yuan Shih-Kai had received the Mandate of Heaven to ascend the Dragon Throne.

This conviction would be all the more acceptable in view of the strong reaction throughout the country in favour of the monarchical principle.

Everything points to Yuan Shih-Kai as the man most suited to further the best interests of China. Unscrupulous according to our standards in some of his methods of gaining power, he has nevertheless invariably made use of that power in a truly patriotic spirit. In the course of two years he has safely steered his country through civil war and foreign complications, and has restored order where chaos reigned.

China can boast of many patriots, but Yuan Shih-Kai, alone of all these, combines with patriotism the gift of real statesmanship and an unusual and far-reaching intelligence, in short, all those qualities which, if rightly employed, should enable him to guide China through her difficult period of transition into her rightful place among the nations of the world.

CHAPTER VII

Western influence on the Chinese Revolution—Causes of the fall of the Manchu dynasty—Chinese people's attitude towards the Republican ideal—Comparison between the French and Chinese Revolutions—The re-birth of a nation—Return of Kang Yu-wei—His political ideal contrasted with that of Sun Yat-sen—Triumph of the Moderates—Kang Yu-wei's influence on the New China and its probable results—Forecast of future system of education, and military and naval reform in China—The Yellow Peril—Radical industrial changes probable in China—Dangers of the emigration question—Reasons for believing China will continue under one government—China as a great Power—Influence of Western education upon the religion of the country.

IN the opening chapters of this book we traced the progress of Western ideas in China from the majority of the Emperor Kwanghsu to the death of the Empress Dowager. In this, the concluding chapter, we will endeavour to discover to what extent Western influence has been responsible for the Chinese Revolution.

The fact that this Revolution has led to the establishment of a Republic has strengthened the belief in the minds of many Europeans that its main cause was the introduction into China of Western modes of thought. A closer study, however, of China's past history will entirely dispose of this view. The decadence and weakness of the Manchu dynasty caused its downfall;

precisely as in the case of its Ming predecessors the Chinese people refused to obey a weak rule.

These indisputable facts dispose of the theory of Western influence being at work as regards the Revolution.

The acceptance by China of the Republican form of government can scarcely be traced to European precedent, for at the time of the enforced abdication of the Emperor Hsuan Tung the only genuine Republicans in China were the members of the Tung Meng Hui; and had Yuan Shih-Kai at that moment been strong enough to seize the vacant throne, their political ideal would never have been realised.

In the words of a great European authority on China ¹ "the Republic is the offspring of unexpected opportunity out of sudden chaos, accidental in its birth, and foredoomed to early demise."

The conservative mercantile classes supported the Republic because the only alternative offered to them was a continuance of the hated Manchu rule; and as regards the bulk of the population in China, this was totally ignorant of the meaning of a Republican form of government, so much so that we are told by the Taiyuanfu correspondent of the *North China Herald* that, when Yuan Shih-Kai was, last October, elected President of the Republic, the population of Shensi believed he had ascended the throne.

¹ Mr. J. O. P. Bland.

The Chinese Revolution, like the French one, had its Jacobins, the followers of Sun Yat-sen; and its Girondins, the adherents of Kang Yu-wei; the French Republic founded on the democratic teachings of Rousseau was followed by the autocracy of Napoleon, and in China the democratic Republic of Sun Yat-sen has given way to the despotism of Yuan Shih-Kai.

Following up this simile a little further, it is safe to contend that in as great a measure as the Empire of Napoleon differed from the Monarchy of Louis XVI, so the Empire of Yuan Shih-Kai, should it ever come into being, would be conducted on entirely different principles to the Empire of the Manchus.

The overthrow of that dynasty was the first stage in the evolution of China, and, though there are likely to be innumerable obstacles before this evolution becomes complete, the hands of the clock can never again be put back to where they stood before the Revolution of 1911.

The world has witnessed the awakening of a nation of four hundred millions of people, an event fraught with grave issues both for East and West. Its ultimate destiny is still unknown to us, and all we think or say on the subject is pure conjecture. Will the China of the future be peaceful or combative, retrograde or progressive?

Will she adopt in their entirety the ideals and

institutions of Western civilisation, or will she, emulating the example of Japan, seek to graft them on to her own?

In attempting a forecast of the China of the future, the downfall of Sun Yat-sen and his party and the return to power of Kang Yu-wei and his following are of the greatest significance. Sun Yat-sen derived his inspiration from Europe and America, whilst Kang Yu-wei is entirely influenced by the political ideals of Japan.

Both Kang Yu-wei and his able lieutenant Liang Chi-chao have an intimate knowledge of Japan, and with that knowledge the conviction has forced itself upon their minds that the true secret of that country's greatness is to be found in the fact that, while adopting all that is best in the civilisation of the West, she has retained unimpaired her national ideals and her time-honoured traditions.

The leaders of the Kuomintang desired to uproot the old China entirely, and to refashion her on completely Western principles. The reformers of 1898, actuated by truer statesmanship, wish to follow the example of the regenerators of Japan, and to build up in China the new edifice of state on the old foundations. Following up their enlightened principles, they will probably adopt, as Japan has done, the political institutions of the West, and completely reform the educational system in China, retaining, as the only survival of her

time-honoured traditions, her ancient classical literature.

The Army and Navy in China are almost certain to be remodelled on entirely Western systems, and these changes bring into prominence the question so often debated upon by Europeans, the question of the Yellow Peril. It is within the last fifteen years that the Emperor of Germany, referring to China's vast population and her evident desire to emulate the West, prophesied the invasion of Europe by the Mongolian races.

There is little doubt that the Mongolian races are sufficiently strong in number to carry out this prediction; on the other hand certain fundamental traits in the character of the Chinese render it very unlikely that they would associate themselves with such a scheme.

The Chinese are not really a warlike nation, though they have often, when, as in the first siege of Nanking, well led, shown remarkable bravery.

In Japan the military caste is revered above all others by the entire nation, as demonstrated by the immense prestige enjoyed by the Samurai; in China the statesman and the scholar have always been exalted above the soldier, and there has never been, as in Japan, an hereditary military caste.

China's greatest conquests were made by rulers of alien origin, such as Kublai Khan, first Emperor

of the Yuan dynasty, and Chienlung, fourth Emperor of the Manchu dynasty. The natural love of peace so inherent in the character of the bulk of the Chinese people is not likely to be affected by Western education. There is, however, another point of view from which the Yellow Peril may become a serious menace to the peace of the world. This danger arises out of the refusal of other nations to admit Chinese immigrants. The industrial life of China is likely to undergo great changes in the near future.

The country will be penetrated by a network of railways; steamships owned by Chinese companies will carry Chinese produce to foreign lands, and both Europe and America will be brought face to face with a formidable trade competitor.

This industrial development will be dependent upon the national credit and the extent to which financiers will be willing to provide the further necessary capital, a question which will be contingent upon a settled form of government being established.

When in search of new fields of activity, the surplus population is likely, for reasons of proximity, to turn to those very countries which at present so rigidly exclude the Chinese race. What will the attitude of these countries be when this question of immigration becomes acute; and will they maintain their present policy of rigorous

exclusion, or incline to leniency, and, in concert with the Chinese Government, devise an agreement by which, while admitting a limited number of Chinese immigrants, they would safeguard their countries from any undue influx of Chinese settlers?

The gravest issues depend upon the solution of this problem, for the new China is likely to be keenly sensitive on any point which touches the national honour and quick to resent any legislation which starts on the assumption of the inferiority of the Chinese as compared to the Europeans.

The satisfactory adjustment of this question will require the ablest statesmanship combined with a policy of moderation and restraint.

Many people hold the view that the Revolution in China, far from promoting her regeneration as a united nation, is likely to result in her being divided into small independent states, thereby lessening her power in the eyes of the world.

The past history of China does not favour this belief.

We have somewhat of a parallel to recent events in China in the occurrences of the year 1644, when the Ming dynasty was overthrown by Li Tzu-cheng, who was in turn overthrown by the Manchus.

The time immediately following upon these events marks a period of anarchy over a large

proportion of the country. China, however, passed safely through her terrible ordeal, and thirty-two years later had once more become a strong and united empire under the enlightened rule of the great Manchu Emperor Kanghsi.

Everything points to China having found a second Kanghsi in the person of Yuan Shih-Kai. There seems reason to hope that his great intellect and strength of character will prove equal to the magnitude of his task, and that under his rule China will attain the strength and self-reliance essential to a great nation retaining her national ideals in all that appertains to her spiritual life whilst becoming Westernised in all matters of practical value.

The Confucian religion has been the guiding star, the greatest spiritual and moral force in the life of the Chinese nation in the past as it is in the present, and will be in the future.

The doctrine it teaches is that the Chinese nation is one great family, held together by the fervour of its patriotism. The spread of Western education is likely to strengthen that patriotism, and will therefore still further uphold the teachings of Confucius.

Upon Yuan Shih-Kai, if he, as all well-wishers of China must hope, continues to be the arbiter of her destinies, will devolve the task of giving her a constitution which will satisfy the moderate

reformers whilst retaining in his own hands the supreme power of government.

He will also in all sincerity constitute himself the defender of the Confucian faith, and thereby combine for his country's benefit the advantages of a modern constitution with the precepts of the sages.

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